

The American REVIEW of REVIEWS

J u l y , 1 9 1 0

p . 1 1 3

THE ROYAL SUCCESSION IN ENGLAND AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

IN the British reviews and monthly magazines of a general character, this one topic obscures all others. The death of King Edward VII., the accession of King George V., and the probable effect the change of sovereigns will have upon the present so-called constitutional crisis, are discussed at great length by many well-known writers.

The phase of the subject coming in for most consideration is the character of the late King Edward, and his unexampled popularity. From a great number, we select a few representative extracts.

KING EDWARD AS A DIPLOMAT

Dr. Dillon, in the chronique of foreign affairs in the *Contemporary Review*, explains from first-hand knowledge the part which the King has played in foreign affairs. He says that the King did play a leading, if not a prominent, rôle in Britain's and the world's affairs. Dr. Dillon refers to two instances in which the King exercised decisive influence. The first was when a certain line of action—technically a matter of courtly courtesy, essentially a stroke of political diplomacy—was submitted for his consideration, as likely to be advantageous to Great Britain and conducing to European peace. The King considered the question, but declined to undertake it. The hour, he said, had not yet struck:

On another occasion, a serious danger, hitherto, I believe, unrecorded, which menaced this country from a side then formidable, but now the reverse of unfriendly, was deftly warded off and its source sealed up altogether, by the benign influence of the King. True, it was only influence, not intervention, still less diplomatic negotiation. In fact, the special subject which evoked his solicitude was hardly touched upon in the exchange of views that passed between him and the personage on whom the final decision rested.

The Royal Succession

The article on the King in the *English Review* says that the personality of King Edward raised England to her present position in Europe; "so may his removal depose her." The formalism of the Victorian era had ended by eviscerating the stomach of the national endeavor; we had grown stern without sturdiness, dull of vision, overproud, overbearing." All that the King broke down. "Instead of the Juggernaut of a brutal and cynical Imperialism, our colonial and Imperial policy is recognized as a clean and sound one." For the first time since the Crimean War foreigners are prepared to accept England as "a disinterested human and civilizing force, as a lamp in the twilight of progress." Without striking a blow our international power has crystallized into a magnificent supremacy.

EDWARD A TRULY PARISIAN KING

Laurence Jerrold contributes to the *Contemporary Review* an article concerning the King in Paris. He lays great stress upon the fact that the French did not want the *Entente*, that King Edward by sheer force of courage and divination forced it upon them:

King Edward came like a man forcing his friendship upon a stand-offish family. The French did not want it; they would just as well have accepted (politically, and only politically, no doubt) the hand of Germany a few years before; they deliberately allowed England, through her King, to make all the advances, and they did not take one step forward towards meeting her. All this, which has never been said outright, can be said bluntly now. King Edward was not welcome when he came to Paris bringing the offer of the *Entente Cordiale*. We in Paris thought he very well might be hissed. Edward VII. had read Parisians with extraordinary perspicacity. The very thing to appeal to them was, as we acknowledged afterwards, what he had done, to come boldly, without asking by their leave, to them, then a politically hostile people.

This suddenly struck the Parisian imagination. With a few decisive strokes they drew for themselves the portrait of a King who was a real man, "Le Roi Edouard." In France, whenever he came, he not only always did the right thing, but he always did the real thing. He never missed an opportunity, and never seemed to go out of his way to create one. He always did the Parisian things naturally:

In fact, compared with him, not only Presidents of the Republic but Parisian aristocracy seemed provincial to the Parisian. That is why Parisians are not in the least gushing when they talk of "their national loss" and feel that they have lost the King of Paris.

"THE MOST POPULAR MAN IN THE WORLD"

This is the characterization of King Edward

OldMagazineArticles.com

The Royal Succession

made by several writers, including Mr. A. C. Benson in the *Cornhill Magazine*. As to the late monarch's influence, Mr. Benson says:

It came from a frank and manifest love of life, not enjoyed in a selfish isolation, but with an open-handed generosity, and a desire to share with others and to communicate to them his own enjoyment, his delight in existence, with all its interests, pleasures, and duties. May I be pardoned for relating a simple personal reminiscence?

All the qualities which underlie the British ideal of sport existed naturally in the King's temperament. He was ambitious without jealousy, modest under success, and good-humored under defeat. He was tranquil in anxiety, courageous in danger, and simple in prosperity. And in English public life he set an example to all politicians and statesmen of genial courtesy and unruffled *bon-homie*, which did not stand for an absence of conviction, but for a resolute subordination of all predilections to harmony and concord.

INFLUENCE ON RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

Special stress is laid by Mr. Arthur Ramsey, writing in the *Westminster Review*, on what he calls the Victoria-Edward influence on theological controversy. He says:

Perhaps there is nothing in the domestic policy of Victoria and Edward which has been more praiseworthy than the attitude of the Crown towards the ever-varying and exceptionally vigorous theological and ecclesiastical controversies of the last seventy years. Not only has the Crown always refrained from unconstitutional interference, and even from any suggestion of official partisanship, but it has constantly exhibited a recognition of the healthiness of this free and strenuous movement. The Prince Consort brought with him an atmosphere of theological freedom; and this atmosphere has marked the history of the whole of the royal family. No sect, no party, was ever—so far as I have been aware—made to feel that the Crown held any sentiment other than sympathy towards those who were honestly endeavoring to realize their own convictions. The policy has been that of wisely and, in a certain sense, sympathetically leaving alone.

THE CHARACTER OF GEORGE V.

As to the character of King George, it is generally conceded "that he has very strong convictions and no small ambition." To quote further from Mr. Sydney Brooks, who writes in the *Fortnightly Review*:

I look round and I see no statesman untrammelled, powerful, persuasive enough to turn to national account the propitious influences and emotions of the hour, to stop this dire drift towards a whirlpool of chaos and faction, to make a final stand for safety and sanity. I see none—unless, indeed, it be his Majesty, King George V. King George is in most respects as amply qualified to cope with the situation that lies ahead of him as was King Edward; in a few respects he is, perhaps, less qualified, and in a few others more so. Though

The Royal Succession

he would regret the necessity of having to make a decision so early in his reign on so vital an issue, the responsibility would not frighten him. His training as a sailor taught him how to make decisions and meet responsibilities; he is probably already as well posted on the pros and cons of the main question as the average Member of Parliament; and if the obligation were forced upon him of taking a definite stand, he would have no hesitation in facing it.

In the editorial summary in the *National Review*, there is some strong praise of the new monarch as a serious student of international affairs. We quote:

He is known to have disapproved Russophobia, which used to be the corner-stone of British foreign policy. He took an equally large-minded view of our relations with France, and in his famous speech on his return from his great imperial pilgrimage, he went out of his way to pay a graceful compliment to French genius in constructing the Suez Canal. Nowadays such an observation would pass unnoticed, because we are on the best terms with France, and public men on both sides of the Channel have acquired the habit of exchanging friendly allusions. But in 1901, when the Prince made his speech, Anglo-French relations were unfriendly, and his observation was noted and appreciated in Paris, where it is treasured as an early symptom of the subsequent *entente* inaugurated by his father. King George is, needless to say, a great admirer of King Edward's foreign policy, which he will scrupulously follow, and his friendship with the Russian Emperor will facilitate his task.

AS TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL SITUATION

The bearing of the change of sovereigns upon the political situation in the Empire comes in for a good deal of discussion. The influence of the crown, most of the writers believe, is bound to be decisive. In a vigorous article in the *Fortnightly Review*, Mr. Walter Sichel says:

The Crown is no "estate" of the realm; it symbolizes the realm itself. It is now beyond and above the rancors of class or clique or party; it is an umpire with definite duties and discretionary rights, as well as delegated authorities. A despotic bureaucracy—a Jack-in-office dictatorship—so far from ceasing to be a menace, seems daily looming more largely; and it is this that the influence of a King secure in the hearts and wills of his people can check—not only by counsel, by persuasion, by example, but also by counteraction, by an unpartisan appeal to the whole nation and the wide Empire. He alone can bring the needs of empire into tune with the aspirations of democracy, for he is at once democratic and imperial. He alone stands for universality. He can respond to the true voice of public opinion.

Mr. Garvin and Mr. Brooks, also writing in the *Fortnightly*, agree that compromise is the duty of all parties in the present situation. Says Mr. Garvin:

OldMagazineArticles.com

The Royal Succession

The unhappy constitutional controversy shortened King Edward's life; and it is plain to all thoughtful men that unless a quarrel whereof none can see the end is not composed in time and settled by consent upon sane and honorable terms, it may be fatal to all we care for. It is the duty of the country to insist that every resource of negotiation or mediation shall be tried before the constitution is torn to pieces by force, patched up by party majorities for immediate party ends, only to be torn up again by other majorities to serve other passing emergencies. If we were impotent to devise any better issue, it would be a confession of mental bankruptcy, involving a political catastrophe and national discredit. All these conditions are so clear that the quarrel should be disposed of in advance by a voluntary arrangement between parties, before the Sovereign is constrained to follow the great precedent set by Queen Victoria in 1885.